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Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCCT-01 OMB-01 PER-01 A-01 OPR-01

FBO-02 /079 W
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R 030920Z JAN 75
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2524
INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY AIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 0063

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT PFOR ET
SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS

REFS: (A) ASMARA 0002: (B) FBIS BEIRUT 11/0152ZJAN75;
(C) ASMARA 1011, 1010, 1008 AND 1006 (ALL NOTAL)

SUMMARY. THIS MESSAGE OFFERS COMMENTS ON THE ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS DESCRIBED IN THE REFERENCES. IT DISCUSSES THE PROBLEM POSED BY PROXY INTERLOCUTORS WHO MAY PROVE UNABLE TO COMMIT THEIR PRINCIPALS; NOTES THAT THE PROPOSALS BEING DISCUSSED BY THEM SEEM A PRIORI FEASIBLE OF ACCEPTANCE BY THE EPMG; AND FOCUSES ON THE KEY
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DIFFICULTIES WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE OVERCOME IF AN ACCOMMODATION IS

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TO BE WORKED OUT. THESE ARE THAT THE "DRIG" WILL HAVE TO AGREE TO FEDERATION OR MEANINGFUL AUTOHOMY FOR ERITREA IF IT IS TO HAVE ANY HOPE OF ENGAGING SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF THE INSURGENCY IN NEGOTIATIONS, AND THAT THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT EVEN SUCH CONCESSIONS WOULD MOVE THE INSURGENTS TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. END SUMMARY.

1. A SALIENT FEATURE OF THE DISCUSSIONS DESCRIBED IN ASMARA REFERENCED TELEGRAMS IS THAT THEY ARE NOT RPT NOT BEING HELD BETWEEN THE PRINCIPALS, VIZ, THE "DIRG" AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INSURGENTS. INSTEAD, THEY ARE APPARENTLY BEING CONDUCTED BY INTERMEDIARIES OF UNCERTAIN INFLUENCE UPON THE PRINCIPALS ON EITHER SIDE, VIZ., GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, NOTABLE FROM MOFA, MINCOMMERCE AND MININFO, ETC., WHOSE VIEWS MAY NOT BE DECISIVE WITH THE "DIRG" AND WHO MAY OR MAY NOT BE ABLE TO COMMIT IT, AND ERITREAN NOTIABLES WHO MAY OR MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SPEAK TO OR FOR THE INSURGENTS. THE REF FBIS MAKES THIS DILEMMA EXPLICIT. WHILE THE "DIRG'S" MAJ. BERHANU BAYEW IS REPORTEDLY A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT DELEGATION, WE QUESTION WHETHER HIS PRESENCE IS SUFFICIENT TO OVERCOME THIS DIFFICULTY ON THE GOVERNMENT SIDE. FYI: WE HOLD MAJ. BERHANU AS FORMER HSI MILITARY ACADEMY LEGAL ADVISER AND INSTRUCTOR; A PROBABLE MEMBER OF THE "DIRG" STEERING COMMITTEE; THE CHAIRMAN OF ITS LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE; A MEMBER OF THE SECOND EPMG DELEGATION TO GO TO KHARTOUM; A GRADUATE OF THE SECOND CLASS OF THE HARRAR MILITARY ACADEMY AND BELIEVE HIM TO BE AN AMHARA FROM GOJJAM. END FYI.

2. NONE OF THE PROPOSALS LISTED IN ASMARA 1010 STRIKE US AS A PRIORI INFEASIBLE, ALTHOUGH SOME OF THEM SEEM QUITE SUPERFLUOUS. IT SHOULD THUS BE POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN THE PMG AND THE INSURGENTS AND THIS MAY HAVE OCCURRED ALREADY, NOTABLE IN KHARTOUM. KHARTOUM, OF COURSE, IN AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF SOURTS AND HAS, AS SUCH, ALREADY BEEN FOUND APPROPRIATE BY THE PMG FOR THE DISCUSSION OF THE ERITREAN QUESTION WITH A FRIENDLY THRID POWER AND LIKELY THE INSURGENTS. WE HAVE , HOWEVER, REASON TO BELIEVE THAT "DIRG" DELEGATIONS WILL SHORTLY LEAVE FOR CAIRO, BEIRUT, DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD, PRESUMABLY TO PURSUE THE DIALOGUE ON ERITRAE WITH THE GOVERNMENTS DEEMED MOST INFLUENTIAL WITH THE INSURGENTS AND QUITE POSSIBLE WITH THE INSURGENT LEADERSHIP ITSELF. IT SEEMS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PMG NEEDS A PLEBISCITE TO ASSESS ERITREAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS "ETHIOPIA TIKDEM." AS WE SEE IT, THE PROBLEM IS NOT THAT THE EPMG IS UNAWARE OF ERITREAN FEELINGS AS IT IS UNCERTAIN OF ITSELF AND NOTABLE OF THE "DIRG'S" CAPACITY TO AGREE TO CONCESSIONS OF A SCOPE SUCH AS TO PERMIT IT TO ENGAGE THE INSURGENTS IN NEGOTIATIONS
.
ERITREAN POLITICAL PRISIONERS, FINALLY, HAVE BEEN RELEASED BEFORE AND CAN PRESUMABLY BE RELEASED AGAIN, AND DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL

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THAT AMAN HAS ALREADY ADMITTED PUBLICLY THAT ATROCITIES HAD BEEN COMMITTED, FOR EXAMPLE AT OM HAJJER. THE PAYMENT OF DAMAGES IN INDIVIDUAL CASES ALSO SEEMS FEASIBLE.

3. WE REMAIN OF THE VIEW, THEREFORE, THAT THE GREATEST DIFFICULTY LIKELY CONTINUES TO BE THE "DIRG'S" CAPACITY TO BUILD A CONCENSUS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THE TYPE OF CONSESSION INHERENT IN THE SAUDI PROPOSAL OF REVERSION TO FEDERATION. THE DEPARTMENT IS FAMILIAR WITH THE MAIN REASONS FOR THIS DIFFICULTY WHICH FLOW FROM THE "DIRG'S" ETHNIC COMPOSITION, ITS INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS, THE PRECEPTION THAT SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS TO THE NORTHERNERS COULD FURTHER JEOPARDIZE THE NATIONAL UNITY IN OTHER REAGIONS, AND ITS PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO "UNITY", VIZMN THE POLITICAL AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE EMPIRE. A SIMILAR DIFFICULTY LIKELY ALSO EXISTS ON THE OTHER SIDE. INDEED, WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT THE MOST HARD-LINE INSURGENTS MIGHT FEEL THAT THEY HAVE LITTLE TO GAIN AND SOMETHING TO LOSE BY TAKING THE "DIRG" UP ON ALL OFFER OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR AN ACCOMMODATION SHORT OF ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE, PARTICULARLY AT PRESENT WHEN BOTH DEVELOPMENTS IN ERITREA AND THE SITUATION IN ADDIS IS LIKELY TO BE VIEWED BY THEM AS OFFERING THEIR MOVEMENTS UNPARALLELED OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, POLITICAL SITUATION, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ADDIS00063
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750003-0376
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750181/aaaacsys.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 ASMARA 0002:, 75 FBIS BEIRUT 11/0152ZJAN75
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <14 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COMMENTS ON ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, ET
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006